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TAGS: PGOV IS GOI INTERNAL PEACE PROCESS GAZA DISENGAGEMENT

SUBJECT: BEILIN BINDS NEW YAHAD PARTY TO GENEVA ACCORD

Classified By: Political Counselor Norman Olsen for reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: New Yahad Party leader Yossi Beilin left no doubt that Yahad and the Geneva Accord are joined at the hip when accord co-author Yasser Ahmed Rabbo sat center stage with Beilin at the party's founding ceremonies on March 31. Copies of the accord and Yahad's basic covenant were both distributed to attendees. Beilin used the party's founding reception to attack PM Sharon's unilateral disengagement plan, and veteran MK Yossi Sarid used it to lambaste what he described as Sharon's bribery-tainted tenure and to stress his concern for the financially-strapped among Israel's population. Beilin is clearly clutching at his internationally renowned peace plan prototype to breathe life into the new party. End summary.

What's Abed Rabbo Got to Do With It?

2. (C) Attendees at the March 31 "Socialist Democratic Israel" ("Yahad") Party founding ceremony for the diplomatic community entered the auditorium to find newly-elected Yahad leader Yossi Beilin seated center stage next to his Geneva Accord Palestinian partner Yasser Ahmed Rabbo. Both Yahad's "Basic Covenant" and the Geneva Accord were distributed to guests, flagging that with Beilin at the helm, the Geneva Accord is now part of Yahad's platform.

3. (C) Considering his diplomatic audience, it was not surprising that in his remarks, Beilin focused on condemning PM Sharon's unilateral disengagement plan while promoting the Geneva Accord, and all but ignoring Yahad's economic and social agenda except for one reference linking Yahad to the greater international socialist movement. Beilin asserted that unilateral actions, such as Sharon's proposed withdrawal from Gaza, would further isolate Israel from its neighbors, creating a "Jewish ghetto." Israel can not "go it alone," he stressed, nor can it negotiate with the Palestinians "through the United States." Beilin opined that there is a partner -- symbolized in the person of Abed Rabbo -- and that the Geneva Accord is the peace-process solution.

Left-Wing Love-Fest at Founding Ceremony

4. (C) The ceremony for Yahad rank-and-file was held in a converted Tel Aviv port hanger with a crowd totaling some 300 Meretz-now-Yahad members who appeared to be mainly Yahad-tee-shirt-clad youth, hippie holdovers, and pensioners. Yairiv Oppenheimer, Peace Now Director and Labor Party activist, manned a distribution table that offered bumper stickers stating "Leave the territories for Israel's Sake." When veteran Meretz MK Yossi Sarid appeared on stage, his modest, bespectacled image was tripled on the two enormous video screens sandwiching the stage giving the event the aura of a rock concert.

5. (C) Sarid began his speech almost mumbling, appearing tired and uninspired, thanking Beilin for taking on the challenge of leading Yahad in difficult times, and praising defeated leadership candidate Meretz MK Ran Cohen. Sarid's voice gained volume, his posture straightened and his whole persona puffed up when he laid into his attack against Sharon. He sarcastically noted how strange it is that Sharon boasts about knowing many facts and figures, big and small, but when it comes to knowing how millions of dollars appeared outside the window of his own home (referring to the Greek Island and Cyril Kern bribery scandals), Sharon pleads ignorance. Sarid cast Sharon's money scandals against the backdrop of cash-strapped society where many are struggling to pay for the food and wine they will need for the upcoming Passover holiday.

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